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THE SHULTZ-WEINBERGER FEUD

By Philip Taubman

THUNDER ROLLED ACROSS the flight deck of the French aircraft carrier Clemenceau in the eastern Mediterranean. One by one, 14 Super Etendard jet fighters roared skyward and then banked toward Lebanon. Their mission: to retaliate for the truck bombings of the French and American military headquarters in Beirut that had killed 59 French paratroopers and 241 American servicemen.

Until that day — Nov. 17, 1983 — the raid had been conceived and planned as a joint French-American effort to attack targets near the Lebanese town of Baalbek, a stronghold of pro-Iranian Shiite Moslem militiamen believed by the Central Intelligence Agency to have been involved in the bombings. President Reagan had authorized Navy fighter planes attached to the Sixth Fleet to join the air strike, a decision that has remained one of the better-kept secrets of the Reagan Administration. It was the first time an American President had approved a counterterrorist attack.

But the French carried out the strike alone. The American planes never took off. The exact reasons remain classified, but this much is certain: A mission championed by Secretary of State George P. Shultz, viewed warily by Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger and approved by the President was aborted because the final go-ahead order was not issued in time by the Defense Department.

According to Michael I. Burch, a Pentagon spokesman, Weinberger was not personally responsible for that decision. Some White House officials say otherwise, insisting that Weinberger tacitly agreed to have the mission scrubbed. But at the very least, the incident serves as a dramatic example of the battles that have raged over foreign policy during the last two years, in no small part because Shultz and Weinberger have disagreed on a variety of major issues. "The clash between Shultz and Weinberger," says a former senior Administration official, "and the inability to go anywhere to get disputes settled, produced paralysis in many areas."

When the conflict goes public, as it often has, it creates an impression abroad of confusion and uncertainty in the making of American foreign policy. Within recent weeks, for example, the two men have disagreed publicly over how the Administration should respond to the shooting last month of an Army officer by a Soviet soldier in East Germany. The State Department has said that the United States would seek an apology from the Russians and compensation for the officer's family, but meanwhile, the Department has announced plans for a meeting between American and Russian commanders in Europe, aimed at avoiding such incidents in the future. Weinberger, on the other hand, has insisted that the meeting of the commanders should not take place before the Russians offer an apology.

On the face of it, the two men might have been expected to get along better. Neither had extensive foreign-policy experience before moving into his current job, and neither was strongly identified with particular national-security positions. Yet they have bickered bitterly — a remarkable display for men who are, as a former Shultz associate puts it, "pretty buttoned-down fellows."

A White House official tells, for example, of one White House meeting in 1983 when Shultz, frustrated by Weinberger's reluctance to apply more military pressure against Syria, said, "If you're not willing to use force, maybe we should cut your budget." Weinberger, according to one of his aides, seemed intentionally to taunt Shultz about the failure of the 1983 agreement between Israel and Lebanon that Shultz had personally negotiated.

The sources of the conflict between the two men are partly institutional: The State Department's mission is to seek diplomatic accommodation, sometimes through the selective application of American military force abroad. The Defense Department, directly responsible for defending the nation's security against hostile powers, is often more conservative about improving relations with the Soviet Union and less willing to commit American forces to combat. During the Ford Administration, for example, Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger and Defense Secretary James R. Schlesinger frequently clashed along these organizational lines, with Kissinger favoring détente with Moscow while Schlesinger warned that a surface improvement in relations would not alter ingrained Soviet belligerence. In fact, there are experts who believe that vigorous policy disagreement between the two departments is both inevitable and healthy.

But far more than is generally recognized, and to a far greater degree than in the past, the differences between Shultz and Weinberger reflect very different backgrounds and temperaments and a longstanding professional rivalry. "There is a personal edge to the disputes between George and

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Cap that is much sharper than previous feuds," says a veteran national security official. "These guys have been rivals for 15 years." The competition dates back to 1970, when Shultz was director of the Office of Management and Budget in the Nixon Administration and Weinberger was his top deputy. Later, both men worked for Bechtel, a giant construction company in San Francisco, with Weinberger again in a lesser position.

At times, Weinberger has clearly chafed at the disparity. Joseph Laitin, who worked in the budget office in the early 1970's, recalls, "Cap became so frustrated with his lack of clear authority that he finally insisted that George sign a memorandum designating him as the acting director when George was out of town."

Now, in its latest incarnation, the Shultz-Weinberger relationship provides a vivid example — perhaps the clearest in recent history — of the interaction of personal factors with Goverment policy making.

The Shultz-Weinberger disputes, coupled with a lack of clear direction from the White House, have produced — and continue to produce — stalemates over key foreign-policy and defense issues. For example, Weinberger and Shultz and their aides fought endlessly during Reagan's first term over what position on arms control to take to the bargaining table in Geneva. When the arms talks resumed last month, American negotiators were given unusually broad instructions by President Reagan, in part because Shultz and Weinberger remained divided over what sort of deal to offer the Russians.

Similar disputes led to a still-unresolved impasse over how to deal with the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, with Shultz favoring diplomatic initiatives and Weinberger advocating an increase in United States pressure on the regime. Their disagreements also contributed to a breakdown of American diplomatic efforts in the Middle East.

Just how large a role personal antagonism plays in the Shultz-Weinberger struggles is difficult to determine precisely, but dozens of interviews with their past and present associates and with Administration officials who have seen them together suggest that it is a significant factor. Both men declined to be interviewed about their relationship or even to discuss larger policy questions for an article about their relationship.

Late last year, when Shultz and Weinberger publicly aired their different views about the proper use of American military force, the White House showed signs of impatience. In past Administrations, the President's national security adviser has often mediated differences between Secretaries of State and Defense, and the current adviser, Robert C. McFarlane, has recently sought to exert a modifying influence. In fact, Shultz and Weinberger have muted some of their disputes in recent weeks. But there is little optimism in the Administration that McFarlane can do anything more than paper over the differences.

THE RELATIONSHIP between Shultz and Weinberger is complex and subtle, born of different backgrounds and personalities. Shultz, who is 64, is by nature and training a professor, mediator and private man. He prefers conciliation to confrontation. Often impassive — a colleague describes him as "sphinxlike" — Shultz is a man of enormous self-assurance. Weinberger, who is 67, is a litigator, a politician, altogether more of a public personality. He seems to thrive on confrontation and, like his idol Winston Churchill, can be totally unyielding in defense of principles he considers important, such as sustained growth in the defense budget. Unlike Shultz, Weinberger does not radiate a sense of being at peace with himself and his position.

After graduating from Princeton in 1942 and serving in the Marine Corps in the Pacific theater, Shultz received a Ph.D. in industrial economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and served on the faculty there from 1946 to 1957. He moved to the University of Chicago Graduate School of Business in 1957 and served as dean of the school from 1962 to 1968. In 1969, President Nixon, who had heard about Shultz from his economic advisers, appointed him Secretary of Labor.

According to friends, Shultz likes nothing more than reading and writing — he has coauthored four books on economic issues — and spending time with his wife, Helena, and their five children. Barrel-chested and balding, he enjoys golf and tennis. And he much prefers a quiet evening at home in Bethesda, Md., to diplomatic receptions or Georgetown dinners. The Shultzes, says Joan Braden, a leading Washington hostess, "don't have big parties. Maybe four or six people, and George cooks steaks in the backyard."

Shultz is not shy about speaking out on issues he considers important, but — unlike some of his predecessors — he appears content to stay out of the news and has little taste for informal exchanges with the press. Some of his travels abroad have produced so few headlines that correspondents flying with him have dubbed his Air Force jet a stealth aircraft.

WEINBERGER, lean and compact, with dark hair and gray sideburns, attended Harvard, where he was president of The Crimson in 1937; he completed Harvard Law School in 1941 before joining the Army. Like Shultz, he served in the Pacific. Born and raised in San Francisco, Weinberger returned there after the war as a lawyer with Heller, Ehrman, White & McAuliffe. He soon became active in Republican politics, and was elected to the State Assembly in 1952. He served there until 1958, when he failed to win the Republican nomination for state attorney general. In 1968, Weinberger returned to Sacramento as the state's director of finance under Gov. Ronald Reagan.

Friends say that Weinberger has long enjoyed the attention and social life that go with public service. According to a friend who has known him for more than 30 years, "Cap's always wanted a certain amount of the limelight." Weinberger wrote occasional book reviews, mostly about historical and biographical works, for The San Francisco Chronicle. After losing the primary for attorney general, he became the host of "Profile, Bay Area," a weekly talk show broadcast live by San Francisco's public television station, KQED.

Robert C. Harris, a former law partner in San Francisco, recalls: "Cap was very popular. He was the life of the party." And today, according to Michael Burch, the Defense Department spokesman, his boss is "out almost every evening." But for all his socializing, Weinberger never drinks alcoholic beverages, and he frequently finds time to jog before going to work.

Weinberger and his wife, Jane, have two grown children. At their summer house in Somesville, Me., on Mount Desert Island, he steams around Somes Sound in a large motorboat that belches black smoke. Says a neighbor, "You always know where Cap is by the smoke."

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Both Shultz and Weinberger are members of San Francisco's Bohemian Club and attend its annual summer encampment in northern California. Once ensconced at one of the dozens of camps located within the guarded perimeter of the 2,700-acre grove along the Russian River, members and guests are urged to shed their professional concerns and join choral groups, attend nature lectures, perform in pageants and otherwise relax. Weinberger is affiliated with the Isle of Aves, a camp known for the quality of its singing. Shultz is a member of the Mandalay camp, which is considered the most prestigious in the grove — its members include Henry A. Kissinger and Gerald R. Ford.

SHULTZ AND WEINberger first crossed careers when they joined the Nixon Administration in 1969 — Weinberger as chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, Shultz as Secretary of Labor. After a year, they both moved to the Office of Management and Budget. According to Joseph Laitin and other former associates at the budget office, there was tension between the two men almost from the start. Shultz seemed to favor the associate director, Arnold R. Weber, now the president of Northwestern University, over Weinberger, who was nominally the No. 2 official. "It was obvious to everyone that Weber, not Weinberger, was the chief deputy," Laitin says.

Weinberger, who had spent a year running the trade commission, clearly was unhappy as a deputy, particularly one who had to compete for power with subordinates. Joseph Martin Jr., a San Francisco attorney and longtime friend, recalls that Weinberger complained that he didn't even have the authority to hire. "Shultz kept Cap under his thumb at O.M.B.," Martin says.

Another colleague from those days says that Shultz would sometimes convene meetings by telling assembled officials, many anxious about possible cuts in their department budgets, that he was "turning you over to Cap, whose mercies are tender." According to a former official, the statement invariably produced laughter from everyone but Weinberger. "Cap didn't appreciate being used as a foil," he says.

Weinberger was appointed director of the budget office in 1972 after Shultz was named Secretary of the Treasury. Several weeks after the change became effective, Shultz scheduled a press conference to disclose the details of the new budget. According to Laitin, "Cap was devastated." Laitin says that when he pointed out to Shultz that the press might interpret the news conference as a snub to Weinberger, Shultz quickly agreed to hold a joint briefing. "George said he never intended to embarrass Cap," Laitin says, "and I think he was sincere." Still, the press conference was held at the Treasury Department.

Most people who worked with Shultz at the budget office, as well as those who have been associates since, describe him as a thoughtful, self-assured executive who does not use Machiavellian maneuvers to outflank competitors. "I don't think George has the slightest understanding how Cap bristled under him," a former budget office colleague says. But despite his scholarly demeanor, Shultz is reputed to be a tenacious and skilled administrator who knows how to accumulate and use power. Even his friends do not dispute Martin's description of him as a "ring-wise" bureaucrat.

In 1972, Shultz blocked White House efforts to use the Internal Revenue Service to harass people on Richard Nixon's "enemies list." When Shultz left Washington two years later, he went to work at Bechtel and taught part time at the Stanford University business school. A year later, Weinberger, who by then was Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, followed Shultz to California and to Bechtel.

Once again Weinberger found himself below Shultz on the pecking order. At Bechtel, the disparity in stature and power was, if anything, greater than it had been in Washington. Shultz ascended to become the No. 2 executive of the Bechtel Group Inc., the corporation's holding company, while Weinberger was general counsel of one of the divisions — a senior position, to be sure, but one that left him a rung or two below Shultz.

According to a story widely circulated in Washington, Shultz invited Weinberger to work at Bechtel. But Stephen D. Bechtel Jr., the company chairman, insists, "I was responsible, and I don't think George was involved at all."

Like others at the corporation, Bechtel says that Shultz and Weinberger did not clash. One reason: The chairman moved quickly to settle disagreements between executives. "Disputes don't fester here for long," a company executive says. Moreover, Weinberger did not report directly to Shultz, and their duties lay in different spheres.

Both men acted as key advisers to Ronald Reagan during his 1980 campaign and the transition period following his election. But Weinberger, a veteran of Reagan's gubernatorial staff and a longtime player in California Republican politics, was personally much closer to the new President and his kitchen cabinet. Two of those early advisers say that Weinberger made clear his desire to be Secretary of State, but Alexander M. Haig Jr. got the job.

Shultz told friends at the time that he, too, was agreeable to being Secretary of State. Some Presidential aides, however, recall that President Reagan was under the impression Shultz wanted to stay at Bechtel. According to these aides, Weinberger did not challenge that impression and sometimes even reinforced it.

WHEN SHULTZ replaced Haig in 1982, there was actually an improvement in relations between the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense. Haig's combative style and Weinberger's insistent involvement in foreign policy had produced intense irritation on both sides. But Shultz and Weinberger soon found their own grounds for disagreement.

The divisions, for the most part, were not produced by the sort of ideological disputes or fundamentally different views about international relations that have often driven fights between top national security officials. Though Shultz had had some experience with overseas economic problems in his Treasury post, neither man had been closely associated with foreign affairs before taking their current jobs. They were both considered to be moderate Republicans; neither had articulated or promoted a particular world view. They were regarded, not as broad conceptual thinkers, but as pragmatists and team players, men who could make large government bureaucracies work and would carry out the policies set by the President.

Their disputes, for example, have few of the ideological overtones that characterized the battles during the Carter Administration between Cyrus Vance, the Secretary of State, and Zbigniew Brzezinski, the national security adviser. "The deepest

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differences between Vance and me were philosophical," Brzezinski wrote in his book about the Carter years, "Power and Principle." Basically, Brzezinski advocated a more assertive, confrontational approach to deal with the Soviet Union; Iran, after the overthrow of the Shah, and other hostile nations.

Yet some ideological differences have seeped into the Shultz-Weinberger relationship as Weinberger has adopted the hard-line, anti-Soviet position of many in the Administration. In this, he has also been heavily influenced by the anti-Soviet views of his key aides, including Richard N. Perle, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy. Shultz, while hardly a pushover on Soviet issues, favors a more flexible approach designed to reduce superpower tensions.

Perle has clashed repeatedly with Richard R. Burt, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs. Known in Washington shorthand as the "two Richards," Perle and Burt are, in effect, the frontline troops in a running dispute over arms control between the State Department and the Pentagon. The intensity of their battle — the two men are barely on speaking terms — in some ways reflects the relationship between their bosses.

Institutional factors make some conflict between the Secretaries of State and Defense and their aides inevitable. Richard F. Fenno Jr, a professor of political science at the University of Rochester and president of the American Political Science Association, sees "a kind of built-in conflict" between the "single-mindedness" of the Secretary of Defense and the "general-mindedness" of the Secretary of State.

Vigorous disagreement and debate, of course, can be a valuable asset in the development of policy, forcing consideration of unorthodox options and challenging accepted positions. Samuel P. Huntington, professor of government and director of the Center for International Affairs at Harvard, comments: "Within limits it's a healthy thing. Governing involves the reconciliation and integration of interests. Both the State Department and Defense Department have concerns which should be represented and it's perfectly natural for their heads to have somewhat different views."

The differences between Shultz and Weinberger, however, have not always fallen within reasonable limits. Their first major clash was over an embargo on overseas sales of certain kinds of oil and gas equipment, a move intended to slow down construction of a natural-gas pipeline from the Soviet Union to Europe. Weinberger fought to maintain the embargo; Shultz opposed the embargo as harmful to Washington's relations with its European allies, and eventually it was dropped.

As a means of forcing the Sandinistas to stop sending military supplies to the guerrillas in El Salvador, Weinberger favored increasing pressure on Managua — boosting American support for the Nicaraguan rebels and conducting large-scale United States military maneuvers in nearby Honduras. Shultz, while not opposed to military pressure, advocated a diplomatic approach as well, including direct negotiations between Washington and Managua. The result of this divergence, as many Government aides acknowledge, has been an often inconsistent and confusing foreign-policy stance in that area.

The differences and tensions between Shultz and Weinberger came to a boil in 1983 over the question of what the United States should do in Lebanon.

Shultz was committed to the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon. According to aides, he felt that the United States had to see through its obligations or suffer a serious setback to its policies in the Middle East and its prestige worldwide. Soon he and Weinberger were tangling. There was no shouting; there were no pyrotechnic outbursts, no hurling of insults — that's not the style of either man — but the tension between them fairly crackled. As the situation in Lebanon deteriorated, particularly after the Oct. 23 truck bombing of the United States and French military headquarters, Shultz advocated military retaliation. Weinberger opposed any escalation of force, arguing that it could lead to a war with Syria.

In late 1983, the President's top national security aides — meeting as the National Security Planning Group, an informal committee of the National Security Council — held a series of sessions in the White House Situation Room, a tightly secured area in the basement of the Executive Mansion. The question: Should the use of force be escalated beyond the shelling by the battleship New Jersey and other vessels positioned off the Lebanese coast? Weinberger, according to participants, refused to budge, a stance that was particularly irritating to Shultz, trained as he was in the arts of mediation and conciliation. "George was very frustrated by Cap's immovability," recalls a close aide to Shultz. Another Administration official adds: "George would leave these meetings as livid as he ever gets."

During one session, according to a participant, Shultz told Weinberger sarcastically, "Never let me ask for the Marines again. If I do, shoot me." Says a former Administration official, "You can't understand the frustration of dealing with Cap until you sit down and try to reach some kind of accommodation. He keeps saying the same thing over and over again. It's like water dripping on a stone."

Shultz and McFarlane eventually succeeded in persuading President Reagan to approve the joint air strike with the French. Shultz, according to his aides, was frustrated and discouraged when American participation in the raid was aborted.

The question of how to respond to terrorism in Lebanon was raised again last month when the Administration, at Shultz's urging, warned Iran that Washington would retaliate if United States hostages held in that country were executed.

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The public bickering between Shultz and Weinberger, in the view of many foreign-policy analysts, has done little to enhance American prestige or influence abroad. Says Brzezinski: "The public venting of disagreements through speeches is damaging to the national interest. It's like a plane with co-pilots trying to turn in different directions." Another former national security official suggests that such feuding can only embolden the nation's enemies. "It must drive fear into the hearts of terrorists," he says dryly, "to hear Shultz and Weinberger arguing in public about how to use force."

The White House clearly has the power to put an end to the Shultz-Weinberger disputes — and the policy stalemates they have caused — but President Reagan's leadership style does not generally include knocking heads to settle differences. He prefers to set the overall objectives and tone of the Administration and leave the details to others. That kind of organization puts a premium on the combatants' ability to win the personal support of the President and his closest aides for particular policy positions.

Weinberger initially had a major advantage over Shultz in such an atmosphere, since his relationship with President Reagan was of much longer standing. Weinberger had far greater access to the President, an open invitation to visit the Oval Office whenever necessary. But top people on the White House staff have worked hard to redress the balance.

According to Michael K. Deaver, White House deputy chief of staff, he and the former chief of staff, James A. Baker 3d, were able to increase Shultz's access to the President and even managed to arrange for the Shultzes to dine occasionally with the Reagans. Other White House aides say that Baker and Deaver felt that Weinberger was damaging the President politically because of his intractable policy positions and his stubborn dealings with Congress over the defense budget.

During the last year, Shultz by all accounts has developed a good working and personal relationship with President Reagan. He has two regular meetings with the President each week, on Wednesdays and on Fridays. The Secretary of State is also more comfortable in his job: He is in greater command of foreign-policy facts and ideas, and he has sorted out the State Department bureaucracy.

Moreover, Shultz has been able to develop those all-important alliances within the Administration, and the recent change in command in the White House staff was a lucky break. Shultz and Donald T. Regan, the new chief, are old friends. When Shultz arrived in Washington in 1982, he and his wife stayed with the Regans until they found a place of their own. On most issues, Shultz has found another ally in McFarlane, the national security adviser, who, according to some of his aides, is often frustrated by Weinberger's intransigence.

The Shultz-Weinberger struggle has proceeded on two levels. They have fought about the overall direction of the nation's foreign policy. They have fought over specific steps to implement policies. Today, according to a senior White House official, "Shultz has prevailed in the sense that the President has endorsed his general agenda of resuming the Geneva negotiations and looking for ways to push forward the peace process in the Middle East." On the other hand, though the President 10 days ago made what he called a "peace offer" to Nicaragua, after encountering Congressional opposition to aid for the anti-Government guerrillas, the White House seems to have adopted the tougher line espoused by Weinberger. Neither man has put his stamp on arms control.

Even on some issues where the Shultz view seems to be in the ascendancy, the President has failed to endorse specific steps to implement those policies in deference to Weinberger's opposition. For example, the American negotiators were dispatched to Geneva without instructions as to precisely what reductions in arms in the Soviet nuclear arsenal would be acceptable to Washington as part of an arms-control agreement.

McFarlane is generally credited with engineering a reduction in some of the outward signs of turmoil. And he has sought to defuse disputes at an early stage by sometimes joining Shultz and Weinberger at their weekly breakfast meetings.

Another example of McFarlane's peacekeeping mission, according to a senior Administration official, was his decision to involve President Reagan at an early stage of the discussions leading up to Shultz's January meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko. McFarlane's goal, the official says, was to make sure that everyone in the Administration would understand that the President really wanted arms talks to resume. And, in fact, harmony was achieved. But as a senior official points out, the agenda of those talks dealt primarily with procedural matters, not the substantive arms-control issues that must be worked out before any final agreements can be reached.

Few authorities believe that recent confusions in United States foreign policy can be resolved until the Shultz-Weinberger war is ended. But in spite of the efforts by McFarlane and others in the Administration, the prospects for such a resolution are slim. "Everyone over here wants them to work together instead of arguing," says a White House aide, "but we know it won't be easy." ■